

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, IR, UK
SUBJECT: FCO DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN WITH MP'S

REFERENCE: (A) LONDON 2424; (B) LONDON 2985

1. LONG-DELAYED MEETING BETWEEN TOP LEVEL OF FCO AND
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN
TOOK PLACE MARCH 23. MINISTER OF STATE JUDD REPRESENTED
FCO IN MEETING WITH FOUR LABOR MP'S, ROBIN COOK, JOHN
WATKINSON, ANDREW BENNETT, AND STAN NEWENS. ALSO
PRESENT FOR FCO WAS MIDDLE EAST DEPARTMENT HEAD LUCAS,
WHO BRIEFED EMBOFF NEXT DAY AS FOLLOWS:

2. THE MP'S BASED THEIR POSITION MOSTLY ON THE RECENT
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT (REFTEL A). LUCAS SAID THEY
PUT THEIR CASE WELL, AND WERE IN TURN ANSWERED SYMPA-
THETICALLY AND REALISTICALLY BY JUDD. MP'S SAID A NEW
SITUATION HAS DEVELOPED SINCE PRESIDENT CARTER HAS GIVEN A
LEAD IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HAS BEEN SUPPORTED
BY FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY
CONTINUED, THE UK CANNOT CONTINUE TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO
THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN IRAN, WITH WHICH BRITAIN
HAS A HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION AND TO WHICH BRITAIN NOW

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SELLS LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE
SENSITIVITY OF THE SHAH, THE MP'S CONTENTED THAT THIS
ARGUMENT WORKS BOTH WAYS SINCE THE UK HAS A LEVER OVER
HIM.
THAT THE UK DOES NOT WISH TO DAMAGE ITS ECONOMIC RELA-
TIONS WITH IRAN BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR BRITISH
EXPORTS AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK. THE UK MUST BE CARE-

FUL, HAVE SOME "STANDING", AND OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF GOOD EVIDENCE. HE SAID THE UK WOULD WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT ANY ACTION IT TOOK DID NOT MAKE THE SITUATION OF THE DEFENDANTS WORSE RATHER THAN BETTER, AND COMMENTED THAT IT IS OFTEN WISER TO LET OUTSIDE NON-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES SUCH AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CARRY OUT THE ACTION.

5. THE MP'S SAID THEY REALIZED THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT GOVERNMENTS CAN DO. THEY ALSO ASKED WHY HMG IS NOT IN CONTACT WITH USG ON THIS ISSUE, TO WHICH JUDD REPLIED, "WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE ARE NOT?"

6. AFTER MP'S LEFT, JUDD INSTRUCTED LUCAS TO DO SOME THINKING ABOUT WHETHER AND HOW HMG SHOULD APPROACH THE SHAH ON THIS ISSUE.

7. LUCAS COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT HE THOUGHT THE MP'S WERE MISTAKEN IN ASSERTING THAT RECENTLY THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS WORSENER IN IRAN, SINCE HE UNDERSTANDS IT HAS IMPROVED. LUCAS ALSO FEELS IT IS MISTAKEN TO ARGUE THAT THE BRITISH SHOULD MAINTAIN CLOSER OR OPEN CONTACT WITH "THE OPPOSITION" TO THE "BRITTLE" REGIMES IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA, SINCE THERE IS USUALLY NO LOYAL OP- POSITION OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY TYPE.

8. EMBASSY COMMENT: LUCAS IS AN INTELLECTUAL ORIENTALIST WHO DEMONSTRATED HIS OWN DEEP PERSONAL CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO FREE VICTOR DICK FROM IMPRISONMENT IN SOUTH CONFIDENTIAL

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YEMEN LAST YEAR. WE WOULD BE GLAD TO HAVE ANY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OR EMBASSY TEHRAN WHICH WE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO LUCAS'S THINKING AS HE CARRIES OUT JUDD'S INSTRUCTION.

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